
Letters, and Instruments,

RELATIVE TO

THE DISPUTE

ABOUT THE

Register-Book at Chatham.

[Price Sixpence.]

THE DISPUTANT

LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS

RELATIVE TO

THE DISPUTANT



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LETTERS,

AND

INSTRUMENTS,

RELATIVE TO

THE DISPUTE

ABOUT THE

Register-Book at Chatham;

WITH

The ADDRESS made to such of the Parishioners,
as composed the Vestry,

Held on EASTER-MONDAY, 1766.

*Strive not with a Man without Cause, if he have
done thee no Harm.*

PROV. iii. 30.

By the MINISTER of CHATHAM.

L O N D O N:

Printed for THOMAS FISHER, Bookseller at Rochester; and
JOHN TOWNSON, Bookseller at Chatham.

MDCCLXVI.

L E T T E R S

AND

INSTRUMENTS

RELATIVE TO

T H E D I S P U T E

ABOUT THE

Register-Book at Chatham;

WITH

The Address made to each of the Parliaments
as connected with the Bill.

Printed by J. G. Smith, 1866.



Printed and sold by J. G. Smith, 1866.
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By the Minister of Chatham.

L O N D O N

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MCCCLXVI

LETTERS
AND
INSTRUMENTS, &c.

IT is very surprizing and grievous to see the excellent Design and Use of *Visitations* so notoriously defeated—that *Churchwardens* (who have their very *Name*, as concerned in Matters of the *Church*, and *Religion*) should do so little for either; and that their solemn *Oaths*, the 26th Canon, &c. should make no greater Impressions on their Minds.

B

That

That worthy and eminent Prelate, *Doctor Gibson*, has discussed this Matter in a strong and most moving Manner; and tells us, " That by presenting *nothing*, a
 " solemn Declaration is made in
 " the Presence of God, and the
 " Church, by the Churchwardens, that in their respective
 " Parishes they know of *no* un-
 " clean Person, *no* common Swear-
 " er, or Drunkard, *no* habitual
 " Neglector of Divine Service, nor
 " *any others*, who by their wicked
 " Lives, are a public Scandal and
 " Reproach to Religion."

By the egregious Neglects, and Indifference of Churchwardens, in executing their Office, it happens,

pens, that the Transferring the
 Business of *presenting* from the
Testes Synodales to them, though,
 no doubt, intended for the better,
 has had the very contrary Effect.
 And the vigilant and excellent
 Bishop *Gibson* observes again,
 “ That since in *all* Places one, and
 “ in *some*, *both* the Churchwar-
 “ dens are chosen by the Parish-
 “ oners (*i. e.* by those, who are
 “ chiefly to be presented; and
 “ that Choice oft-times made
 “ more with an Eye to their Skill
 “ in secular Affairs, than to their
 “ *Zeal* for Religion) the Consti-
 “ tution of our Church in this
 “ Particular is evidently in a *worse*
 “ State, than when the Ordinary

“ was vested with a Right to select
 “ particular Persons out of every
 “ Parish for the conscientious Per-
 “ formance of so important a
 “ Work.”

I wish, I had *no* Reason for any Remark of this Sort. But it is hardly possible to avoid taking Notice, that, in so populous a Parish as *Chatham*, the Churchwardens could not find, amongst *all* the Visitation-Interrogatories, any single Thing, that required their Regard, or was thought necessary, to have a Place in their Presentment-Paper, delivered at the last *Michaelmas* Visitation on Oath, into the Rev. Mr. Archdeacon *Denne's* Court, but an Article

Article of Complaint, that the *Parish-Register* was not kept in a Chest under three Locks and Keys, as the 70th Canon directed.

One would have expected, that this might have put them in mind of the 84th Canon also, as under the very *same* Title—*Of Things appertaining to Churches*, by which another Chest with three Locks and Keys, is required in every Church for *Alms*.

But this, and many other much more material Injunctions could be overlooked without any Kind of Scruple. And I hope to make it appear, to the perfect Satisfaction of every unprejudiced Person, that

that there was not the *least* Room or Foundation to ground any reasonable Complaint with respect to the 70th Canon; which they have thought fit to single out for a Bone of Contention.

As soon as the Affair about this Canon was known to be hotly agitated by the Churchwardens, I consulted with my Friends, and were readily assisted by them in opening all the principal Points, and Circumstances, relating to the Canon; and in shewing the Needlessness and Impropriety of the Attempt; as also in using the most cordial Endeavours to shut out Strife and Discord; and to preserve Peace and Harmony in the Parish.

And,

And, in Confirmation of this Truth, it may be necessary to venture, and produce some of the Letters, which were wrote on the Occasion—they cannot fairly be liable to any *severe Censure*, it being clear enough, that they *could not be intended* for the Sight of the Public.

Copy of the first LETTER sent Mr. A. of Chatham, to be communicated by him to the Church-wardens, &c. &c. as he thought proper.

Memorandum prefixed to said
LETTER.

BOOKS, and Parchments of great Consequence, repositied in Parish Chests, have been borrowed out, and often lost, to the Disappointment of learned and inquisitive Persons, who have found *Directions to such Places* for them.

Some have been much injured, almost eat up, by Worms; and many rotted and destroyed by Dampness, so common in Churches.

And

And as to the Method, Sir, of keeping Parish-Registers, as directed by the 70th Canon, it being operose, over-charged with Forms, and in a Manner impracticable (as observed by the judicious and learned Dr. *Prideaux*, in his celebrated Book of Directions to Churchwardens) is now hardly *any where* followed.

It would therefore be very odd, and ill-favoured, for any Churchwardens to *contend* for a Method, which has been found by *Experience* to be very inconvenient; and for that Reason discontinued almost in every Place in every Diocese and Jurisdiction.

C

Besides,

Besides, there is a great Deal of room to question, whether this Canon (as it often happens) has not been superseded (in great Part) by several Acts of Parliament.

That of 30 *Car.* II. Cap. 3. and 32. for burying in Woollen, requires *all Ministers* to keep an exact Register of all Persons buried, without any Notice of the *Canon*, where it was enjoined *before*. The Churchwardens seem to be no farther concerned, than to provide a Book at the Charge of the Parish—but it is the *Minister*, that on any Default, is to forfeit 5*l.*

6 and 7 *Will. III.* Cap. 6. intituled, Certain Rates and Duties upon Births, Marriages, &c. enjoin *all Ministers* to keep a Register of Persons born, married, and buried, to which the *Collectors* shall have free Access—and *Ministers* neglecting this, shall forfeit 100 *l.*

9 and 10 *Will. III.* Cap. 35. For preventing Frauds and Abuses in the Duties on Marriages, &c. require the *same* of *all Ministers*, on Pain of 20 *l.* *

I be-
* Though these two last Acts were temporary only, yet the Force and Intention of them were the same with all others, during their Continuance. And it does not seem very probable it was ever intended, that the *Collectors*, when they had Occasion to have Recourse to Parish-Registers in doing their Duty, as enjoined by these Statutes,

I believe you will think now of these Acts of Parliaments as I do; and that Legislators may be supposed to do in this Case, as every wise and sagacious Man would in all Matters of Moment, *i. e.* keep them disencumbered; and as free and open for due Execution as possible.

But, in short, if by the *present* Method of keeping the Register, *all* is fully answered, which the *Law* intends; and *Attestations* of

should be obliged to go through the *Forms* required by the *Canon*.

The Acts of Parliament, surely, suppose the Register to be at the *Minister's House*, who is so strictly obliged to take all possible Care of it. And hither the Collectors have easy Access, without the Trouble of going to the Parish-Church (*toties quoties*) or of Churchwardens, &c.

Births, &c. by the Minister *only*, are allowed to be *legal*, and *sufficient* Evidence, I do not see on *what* Foundation any Thing farther can be wanted, or desired.

It would certainly be very absurd to quit this Method, warranted even by Acts of Parliament, and *immemorial* Custom for *any other*, that carried not the most promising Face of doing better; especially for *one*, which has been *tried*, and found by no Means properly adapted to the Purpose. Please to see Mr. Archdeacon *Prideaux's* Directions, Section 100. small Edition; where *his* Opinion on this Point will appear; and it will be very difficult to find *any*
better

better Authority. If this be going too far, you will be so good as to excuse

Yours, &c.

A second LETTER *to the same*
Person.

SIR,

Nov. 20, 1765.

YOU are a pacific Man—I have always found you so; and esteem you for it. And being myself, I hope, a Well-wisher and Friend to Peace, I take up my Pen again on the Subject, I troubled you with before; and should be glad, if you could make what I have *now* to say, turn to some

some better Account than the former.

I The Stifling of a Flame, which seems to be growing up in *such* a Parish as *Chatbam*, must give great Pleasure to the Breast of every Man, that would lend an Hand towards it.

Mr. *W.* seems to be too high-spirited to admit of calm Reasoning, &c. But Mr. *C.* appearing to be of a milder and more tractable Disposition, you have my Consent to communicate the Contents of this Letter to him—and then I have done with the Matter.

I expected to have had my last returned; and hoped, with *some Answer* to it, containing the *principal*

cipal Objections to Mr. F.'s continuing to keep the Register, as *he* and his *Predecessors* have done, I presume, Time out of Mind.

Such a Measure would have made greatly for Peace, as Mr. F. no doubt, would be extremely ready to remove any Complaint, that appeared to carry the *least* Weight with it.

I think, some Danger to *Cbat-*
ham Parish was suggested from christening *Gillingham* Children at *Cbatbam*. Now I am satisfied, that neither Mr. J——on, nor Mr. F. are perfectly pleased with this Thing—and it is the *Importunity* of such People, who live so much *nearer Cbatbam* Church than

than *their own*, which has gained their Consent to it.

But, though the Refusal of indulging their Neighbours in this great Convenience in Case of bad Weather, &c. would certainly be charged on the *other* Side as Instances of great *Unkindness*, &c. yet it is *not* to be imagined, but that on any fair Representations of bad Consequences likely to attend this Indulgence to the Parish of *Chatham*, it would be immediately discontinued.

But Mr. *W.* is rather inclined to push for *Victory*; and pleads a Query, he finds in the Visitation Articles, exhibited at our learned Diocesan's *Primary* Visitation,

D

and

and Dr. B—n's Authority—putting more Stress upon them, than may answer his Expectation. It is a *common* Interrogatory in almost all Visitation-Articles; and has been on Foot above 200 Years—but to little or no Purpose. And Dr. B. (without any Disparagement to so worthy and useful an Author) will never stand in the *same* Light to the learned World with the *ever memorable* Dr. *Prideaux*.

Time, I say *Time*, has convinced us, that his Judgment in the Case is perfectly sound and unexceptionable. People of enterprising Tempers, may like to litigate and try, *what* they can do
in

in the Spiritual Court; then in *Westminster-Hall* (whither the Point in Question, I dare say, must come, on Account of the Acts of Parliament I have mentioned to you)—but at length will wish, they had let the Chace alone.

However, for Argument Sake, we will look on Mr. *W.* after a long expensive Suit, in full Possession of the Palm---and into the *Chest* the Registers *must* go. Well then----*there* they are----under three Locks and Keys. And now let us see, whether the *Canon* will not appear *operose*, as the judicious Archdeacon of *Suffolk* denominated it. *Certificates* of Births,

&c. are *often* wanted in *such* a
 Parish; and frequently require the
quickest Dispatch. But three Per-
 sons being to be got together to
 open the Chest, some very consi-
 derable Trouble and prejudicial
 Delays may arise, and by many
 Repetitions become quite disa-
 greeable and burdensome. And,
 to omit a Variety of other Parti-
 culars, we will advance to the
 Marriages; which, it is well
 known, are a good many in the
 Year, especially when Ships come
 into this Harbour to be paid.
 How then must we proceed *now*?
 Surely, not *without* infinite Puz-
 zle. The Churchwardens must
 attend *every* Wedding (sometimes

two in a Day at *different* Hours) to *open* the Chest; and then must wait the *whole* Time of the Ceremony to shut it again. This is *unavoidable*, as the Minister, the Parties married, and their Witnesses, are to sign the Register as soon as the Office is finished.

What Work is here cut out? Though it may serve as Matter of Entertainment to the Neighbourhood, to see the Churchwardens running backward and forward *so often* to the Church, on *so idle and needless* an Errand.

Yet, methinks, I should be really glad to see Mr. *W.* putting the Books *into* the Chest, in order to enjoy the singular Pleasure of

of hearing of his petitioning the Court *to have them out again.*

But I can deal no longer in such amazing Absurdities ; and will therefore only add further, that I am

Yours, &c.

A third LETTER *to the same*
Person.

SIR, *Nov. 23, 1765.*

YOU may wonder to see my Hand again, after I had told you, in a late Epistle, that I would not concern myself any farther in the *Chatbam* Dispute. But on my happening to tell Mr. F. that
the

the *Complaint*, put about, of his registering Children, especially Illegitimates of *Gillingham* Parish, *without* making any proper and necessary Distinction, with regard to *such* Children, was an Objection of Consequence, if true; and what might alarm and offend almost *every* Parishioner, and would likewise affect what had been wrote by me on the Subject, he very readily shewed me the Register; and I must tell you, that I found with great Pleasure the Charge to be intirely false and groundless.

And as his Entries are chiefly brought from the Minute-Book, carefully kept in the Vestry-Room,

Room, it cannot be supposed, I think, that there should be any material Variations in the Case. And if so, the Accusation is more to be wondered at; and must be looked upon as very disengenuous, inflammatory, and unbecoming the Promoters of it.

The Number of the *Gillingham* Children is inconsiderable; and when one is baptized, *Gillingham* is put against the *Name*; and the *Bastards* are distinguished in *such* Manner, as, I am confident, would satisfy any Judge or Jury whatsoever.

In short, the Register is kept in *such* Order, and with *so much* Care, that I should not be ashamed
to

to attend it to any Court in *Westminster-Hall*.

As you love Peace, and good Neighbourhood, you are commissioned to make what Use you please of this, by

Yours, &c.

These Letters (though so well intended) having availed nothing towards abating the Impetuosity of the Churchwardens, but the Contest must be pushed on, I was willing now to try myself, if I could be more successful, in allaying the Heat of it, by addressing *directly* one of the Churchwardens; and wrote him the following.

E

Mr.

Mr. *W.*

Dec. 14, 1765.

YOU may be assured, that it would be a very great Concern to me (after having been Minister of *Chatbam* almost 20 Years) to be obliged to enter upon a Law-Suit in the Spiritual Court, and probably in *Westminster-Hall* also (I was going to say) about *nothing*. For, surely, it must be looked upon as a pretty strange Event, that Mr. *W.* should *come forth*, and so *vehemently contend* for the Force of a *Canon*, which, though it had its Source in the Reign of *Henry* the VIIIth, has yet, in so long a Tract of Time, gained but little Footing in the World.

I be-

I believe, there are very few Parishes to picked out, in the whole Kingdom, where it has been used, or where it has not been found impracticable, when tried.

You thought you had gained some *great* Advantage over us, from the *Question* about the Register-Book, which was put into the Visitation-Articles, concerning the *Chest*, &c. when my Lord Bishop of *Rochester* first visited his Diocese. But when his Lordship visited the second Time, it was asked, " Have you a Register-Book of Parchment *carefully kept* ?" *All* that was intended, there is Reason enough to

believe, by the *first* Interrogatory, though with *more* Words. And as I will warrant, and make it appear, that our Register is *carefully kept*, it is very wonderful, that *this* should not be thought *sufficient* at *Chatham*, as well as in *other* Parishes.

If you would sit down, and reason calmly on the Subject, you would certainly be convinced, how much Puzzle and Perplexity the Execution of your Scheme must create in the Parish. I am very sensible of it—too much so, as to make myself *too easy* an Instrument in bringing it on, in a Place that I *do*, and am *bound* to wish well to;

I should

I should be glad you would do me the Justice to think this of me, and pay a *little more* Regard to me and my Office.

However, you will be pleased to favour me so far with your Attention, as to be advised by me *not* to let your warm and various Pursuits carry you to Points, that the *Limits* of your Office do no way empower you to touch *. Such Attempts will only serve to bring a great Deal of unnecessary

* A great many Copies of an Hymn for *Christmas* Day, of six Stanzas; and underneath *John Cazeneuve* and *William Witheridge*, Churchwardens of the Parish of *Chatham*, 1765, had been lately printed—and, there is a great Deal of Reason to believe, intended to have been made Use of in *Chatham* Church, if it had not been properly signified, that *no such* Power did belong to the Office of a Churchwarden.

Expence,

Expencc, &c. on yourself; and
may some on yours, &c.

W. F.

These Efforts, for a Relaxation
of Warmth and Zeal in the Mat-
ter, proved likewise to be all in
vain. They were so far from
gaining the least Ground in it,
that a *Vestry* was held on Decem-
ber the 29th; and agreed and or-
dered, that the Registers, for the
future, be kept in the Church;
that the Churchwardens may see
all Marriages, Births, and Burials,
registered according to the 70th
Canon; and that the Church-
wardens do communicate the same
to Mr. Frank.

Soon

Soon after this, Notice was sent me, that the Locks and Keys were provided—and in a little Time more I was acquainted, that the Register was expected at *Chatham* forthwith. And thus hurried, and unworthily treated, nay quite tired out with so many repeated Acts of Incivility, I resolved to get rid of so much Vexation, and to deliver up the Book.

But I could not be quick enough in my Motions to satisfy my Antagonists; and *another* Letter comes, and threatens very hard. I returned an Answer to it---and the *Whole* is forth coming—though need not *now* take

Notice of any more of it than the *Conclusion*---which is, To put an End to all this wearisome Work---as you will not be convinced of the Trouble you are bringing on your own Heads, till you have thoroughly felt it. And as there is usually a General Vestry of the Parishioners on *Easter Monday*, the Registers shall *then* be brought; and if the Majority are for disposing of them, as the 70th Canon directs, so let it be.

This Letter was dated *Feb. 20*, 1766, about *five Weeks only* before *Easter*.

And *now* the Impatience and Eagerness of these Parish-Officers for *Victory*, will appear in their
true

true and full Colours to every Eye. Notwithstanding my Proposal and Offer, I was informed *per* Churchwardens in Writing, that a Vestry was held on the 24th of *February*, when it was agreed, that there could be *no* sufficient Reason, *why* the Register-Book should be kept out of the Parish *till Easter*; and therefore it was ordered, that the Book should be *immediately* brought to the Vestry-Room; and if it was not *immediately* complied with, I should incur the Displeasure of the Parishoners,—create Animosities, &c. &c. I was further acquainted, that the Churchwardens were authorized to use *such*

F

Measures

Measures and Proceedings, as should be advised by Council, Proctors, Attornies, either in the ecclesiastical or temporal Courts; and that they were to set out for *London* (unless prevented by my Compliance) the *very next Day*.

Galloping Work indeed!

But before I advance any further in this my disagreeable Undertaking, it will be worth observing (and surprising it will appear, as the Matter in Question is made to be of the highest Consequence) that notwithstanding the large Extent of *Chatbam* Parish, and its very numerous Inhabitants, the first Order of Vestry was signed by *no more than 18*
Persons;

Persons ; and I find *only 19 Hands* to this last hurrying Affair, tho' it seemed to forebode (without my *immediate* Submission) some *very imminent* Danger to the whole Place.

But to return to my Story : I sent in a few * Hours, after the Notice of this last Vestry, the following Letter to the Churchwardens.

Messrs. *Feb. 25, 1766.*

I Trust, I can say with great Truth, that I have sincerely endeavoured to discharge my Duty,

* The Necessity of Dispatch, &c. &c. will occasion Inaccuracies and Errors, in Things of this Sort ; and proper Allowances for them are now again requested.

as *Minister* of *Chatham*; and to oblige my Flock, by *every* Method in my Power, on *every* Occasion. Nor do I charge *them* with any Want of Respect, or undue Returns to me—far from it. But you now give me to understand, that I am incurring *all* their Displeasure at a great Rate, and shall create great Disturbance in the Parish, unless I immediately comply with your Demands—But I can never believe it, as all my Aim is to prevent causeless and daily Trouble to them, and needless Interruptions in their Shops and constant Business. And as all this will, in due Time, evidently appear, and gain the Applause

plause and Approbation of every
 sedate, peaceable, unprejudiced
 Person, I can by no Means en-
 tertain any such Apprehensions,
 as you insinuate, there will be so
 much Danger of.

I most heartily and truly wish,
 I could not retort the Accusation
 on you, of fomenting Disputes
 and kindling ill Blood among our
 Neighbours—and for *what* real
 Service any farther, than shewing
 Power and Authority, I could
 never be informed. And I am
 certain, at the Upshot of the
 whole Matter, you will have no
 Kind of Thanks for the Expen-
 ces and Vexation you put them
 to.

Many

Many think *even now*, that you are too hot and impetuous ; and hurry on too violently, and without due Decorum. Yet, *instead* of taking any Advantage of your precipitate Proceedings, and letting you *go on* with your *illegal* Vestries, &c. you have been told of your Errors, and reasoned with freely and calmly on the Subject — which would greatly affect *some* Minds ; but you seem much too resolute to admit of any Impressions.

I hope, for the Sake of my Parishioners (whom I shall ever wish well to) that you may have some *other* Business at *London*, than *what* you mention to me.

Nothing

Nothing can now occasion the *Want of Advice*, but a violent Spirit, and Love of Litigiousness; which most Men of any Note would keep at the utmost Distance from.

You have been told, that, as there is usually a General Vestry on *Easter Monday*, and subject to no such Objections, as the rest commonly are, the Register shall then be disposed of, as the Majority shall determine; and what other Motion would you have made?

But as I fear that nothing, which is said by me, can stop your Journey, I hope, that after your Council has been informed

of *what* is intended to be done *so soon* as *Easter Monday*, and honestly acquainted with the *whole* Truth, and *every* Circumstance, you will abide by his Advice; and *then* there will be an End of all the Trouble, which has been so unnecessarily given to yours,

W. F. *

The Gentlemen (as it was guessed) would not be disappointed in their Scheme, but made Use of their Commission, and posted

* Copying being a tedious Work, especially of one's own Letters, &c. and hardly possible to be done *verbatim*, the few Variations, that will now and then happen, must be excused—when the *same* Sense and Meaning may be expressed in different Words, and a Passage amended, enlarged, or abbreviated.

for

for *London*. But as they could find neither Proctor, Attorney, nor Council, to give them *any* Encouragement, they came Home again, and were obliged (though greatly against the Grain) to let the Affair sleep till *Easter Monday*. And then the Register was carried to *Chatbam*, and the following Address made by me to the Vestry — (where there was not a *Man*, who attended at *my* Instance — though great Opposition was expected, and Preparations accordingly made.)

G

Gentle-

Gentlemen !

BEFORE we proceed to the usual Business of this Day, I beg leave to open a few Things to you concerning the Affair, which has of late occasioned no little Ferment in the Parish.

And I take this Opportunity, for the Sake of easing my Mind, and giving, I trust, *such* Reasons for my Conduct in the Dispute (from the Beginning of it to this Moment) as will acquit me even from the *Appearance* of any real Blame in it—however from the severe Charge of being instrumental in raising the Diffensions, which have gained too much Ground amongst us.

I should

I should not easily forgive myself, were I in any Manner conscious of being guilty of kindling a Flame, and disturbing the Peace of a Parish, whose Interests, Harmony, and Happiness, I am so deeply concerned to promote. I hate Strife and Contention from the Bottom of my Soul, as generally attended with much Confusion, ill Blood, and every evil Work.

And I hope, I may be looked upon (I am sure my Office strictly requires it) as a sincere Well-wisher to Unity ; and as one sensible of its being a most consummate and diffusive Blessing.

I flatter myself, that I shall never forget its being compared to the very *Unction* of the High-Priest of God, and the *Fruits* of Unity and holy Concord made to *resemble* the *precious Ointment*---composed of the richest Spices, and throwing around its fragrant and refreshing Odours.

Thus, surely, does Unity---and God forbid, that any Minister, of his holy Gospel, should ever obstruct its spreading and grateful Influences !

But it is Time that I descend to Particulars ; which I will do ; and take my Rise from that of the *present* Altercation, as founded on the 70th Canon---By *this* Canon the

the Parish-Registers are demanded by the Churchwardens out of my Hands, in order to be repositied, as it directs.

Now it must be observed again, that Parish-Registers were first thought of, and ordered to be provided by, *Lord Cromwell*, in 1538---and afterwards approved of and confirmed by King *Edward* and Queen *Elizabeth*; as plainly appears by their Injunctions.

In 1603, the 70th Canon was chiefly framed and compiled from these said Injunctions---and, no doubt, well intended, but unfortunately made too circumstantial, &c.

The

The late very learned and most excellent Archdeacon of *Suffolk* says of it, " That its being
 " operose, and the exact Per-
 " formance, by Reason of the
 " many Accidents, that frequent-
 " ly intervene, in a Manner im-
 " practicable, it is *now no where*
 " in all Particulars followed."
 And I believe it was never brought
 into Use in many Parishes---very
 probably *never in this*---and if it
 ever was, the *immemorial Disuse*
 of it (or *any* Canon) in the Opi-
 nion of learned Men, very much
 abates and weakens the Power and
 Force of it.

It is Matter then of great Sur-
 prize, that (at length) after a
 5 long

long Space of above 200 Years, and after the *Impracticableness* of this said Canon had been *so abundantly* experienced, that *such* a Stir should be made about it; and so much Strefs put upon the Use of it in *this* Parish---which, by the very Populoufness of it, might make it *more* impracticable *here*, if it was not so much so in *others*.

It could not be expected therefore, that my Compliance, in *such* a Case, could be had, *without* my making *some* Remonstrances, and shewing some Dislike to a Proceeding, so big of Trouble and Perplexities, and without the *Appearance* of any *real* Service.

I shall

I shall not say how I have been treated on the Occasion; but whether *deservedly* or not, I should be glad to leave the whole World to judge.

But I have the Pleasure of being satisfied in my Mind, that the Opposition, warm as it is, is entirely without any *proper* Foundation; and that it is *Victory*, which must be principally aimed at in the Contest---though, considering my Age and Infirmities, no great Difficulty nor Honour might attend *such* a Conquest. I say then it is *Victory*, which must *chiefly* be in View. *What else can*, with any plausible Reason, be alledged for the Contension? If
a Re-

a Register, says Dr. *Prideaux*, be kept in every Parish; and all Christenings, Marriages, and Burials, *duly* registered therein---*all* is fully executed that the *Law* requires.

I have often signified my earnest Desire to have *every* Objection *against* my keeping the Register (as usual) stated and represented in as full and strong a Manner as possible—whether any *Omissions*, *Neglects*, or Abuses had been committed; and *who* had suffered, or had any just Reason to make Complaints of this Sort. But *nothing*, worth my Notice or Answer, has been charged—unless the Allegation, founded on

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the Register's being kept *out* of the Parish may be thought so. But I persuade myself, that no *great* Weight will rest here ; and that the ill Use made of my living *out* of the Parish, will evidently appear to stand on the slightest Bottom.

I am often *in* the Parish, and did the Duty of it as long as my Health would permit me. And even now I preach every *Sunday* at the Chapel in the Parish ; and constantly attend the Monthly Sacraments --- and one would think, that my happening to live at *Rochester* (the Occasion of which is well known) could *never*, with reasonable and candid People, be

be made liable to *any* Exception.

And with respect to the *Register*, if *Access* to it may be had *almost* as soon *where* it has so long been, as if it was kept *in* the Parish of *Chatham*, how groundless and absurd (unless Boundaries of Parishes imply more than I ever knew attributed to them) must the Clamour be, which is raised about its being kept out of it?

I think, every unbiaſſed Person can eaſily ſee and apprehend, that a *Certificate*, &c. *whereſoever* wanted, can be procured with *leſs* Trouble and greater Diſpatch, by the *Register's* being in my Cuſ-

tody (seldom from Home) than by applying to my Curate—seeking after two Churchwardens (all probably living at a considerable Distance from each other, may not be at Home, &c.) and *then* by going to *Chatham* Church before the Attestation can be had.

Such Cases, and *many* others, which might be mentioned, shew the Canon to be operose—full of many, tedious, and unnecessary Circumstances ; and consequently *impracticable*.

For *such* obvious and striking Reasons then, I know not how to doubt, but most of the Gentlemen here will be of Opinion, that

that the *present* Method of keeping the Registers, must be most eligible, and subject to the fewest Objections and Trouble---not liable to the Mistakes, which may arise from the Interruptions and Hurry, likely to attend the Registering (twice on every *Sunday*, as enjoined by the Canon) from Burials, private Baptisms, visiting the Sick, &c. ---great Confusion will undoubtedly happen.

But yet, if the Majority will determine for employing the Chest at all Adventures, and in spite of all the Inconveniencies, that are so easily foreseen, I will immediately, according to my Promise,

Promise, deliver up all the Registers to be lodged in it.

The Result was, that the Register for *Births* and *Burials* must be committed to the *Chest*--but clearly for the Sake of *Victory*, as not *one single* Instance of any Damage, any Inconvenience whatever to the Parish, could be charged on my keeping the Register; nor any, as more likely to happen for the future, than had done for almost 20 Years past.

But one very extraordinary Transaction remains for our *particular* Notice,

It has been observed already, that

that a Vestry was held *Dec.* 29, 1765---when it was ordered, that the Registers for Marriages, Births, and Burials, should be kept at the Church, according to the 70th Canon.

But notwithstanding all this, a *dispensing Power* must be used. And as the Register for *Marriages* is supposed to be frequently wanted, and the Trouble, which the Officers had been so often forewarned of, now duly apprehended---*this* Register is *not allowed* to attend the other into the Chest, but left to risque its Fate, with the Surplice and other Things, almost in daily Use.

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So much Arbitrariness is astonishing---and it is hardly possible to believe, that Parish-Officers should be so inconsistent with themselves, as to run counter to their *own* Orders of Vestry, almost as soon as made ; and violate the very Canon, they had raised so much Disturbance about.

They cannot be ignorant, having had of late this Canon *so much* in View (that it requires the Names of *all* Persons christened, married, and buried, to be wrote or recorded ; and whether in *one* Book or *more*, the *same* Care must be taken of *all*. And therefore, as the present Method of keeping the Registers of Baptisms,

tisms, Marriages, and Burials, is not allowed to be sufficiently secure, but must be made so by being put into the Parish-Chest, they must *all* of Course (being look'd upon of *equal* Importance) be secured in the *same* Place.

There cannot be the least room for any Demur about it with fair, uniform, and ingenuous Persons.

But I take my Farewell of this Subject, and, methinks, with some comfortable Expectation, that our *new* Officers will be *more* sedate; follow the Things, which make for Peace; and likewise know

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Him,

Him, who *has* laboured among,
and is over, them, 'till he has
justly forfeited his just Preten-
sions to all Love, and Esteem from
them.

F I N I S.



23·JU·62